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# MONTANA WOMEN'S RESOURCE

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Winter 1982

Vol. 6 Number 2



Elizabeth Cady Stanton



Lorraine Hansberry



Dolores Huerta



Jeannette Rankin

Photos from TABS

## Women's History Week — March 7-13

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# letter to the editor

FROM MONTANA NOW

We who are concerned about the passage of the Equal Rights Amendment in this country must join together to ensure its ratification. Our adversaries tell us that we "can't work together," that we "are always picking at each other," that we (women) "can never agree on anything," etc. ad nauseum. Of course we don't always agree on issues or strategies. We are not sheep, we are thinking, lively human beings. AND, when the chips are down, we women have been and continue to be very good at working cooperatively together.

NOW is leading the effort toward ratification in Oklahoma, Florida, Virginia, Illinois, and North Carolina. NOW organizers and "missionaries" are in unratified states helping feminists and ERA supporters bring about its ratification. In fact, Theresa Boschert, former NOW State Coordinator, is in Oklahoma doing field work, and former chapter president Cheryl Jenni is in Washington, D.C., working at the National NOW office until June 30, the ratification deadline.

In Mt., NOW activists are organizing women and men to participate in the final effort at ratification of the ERA by setting up telephone banks to be used in last minute alerts, and by signing up interested people to be members of the "Message Brigade." Message Brigade members' names are placed on a computer, and are notified by National NOW of expected key votes at critical times, and are given information of who needs to hear from them and how to best reach them.

Here are two of the most important things you can do for the ERA:

Sign up for the ERA Message Brigade and get every ERA supporter you know signed up. AND  
Send messages when you receive alerts.



All that is needed to join is \$2 and willingness to send postcards provided by NOW- or your own letters- to political leaders.

Send your check for two dollars (made out to NOW ERA FUND) to ERA Message Brigade, Box 7813, Washington, D.C., 20044.

If you are interested in becoming a member of NOW, or if you want more information about it, contact me, DE Adams, 1826 Westwood Dr., Billings, 59102.

-DE Adams, Montana NOW

## corrections

Some photos were not credited correctly in the last issue. The cover photos and the photo on page 5 were taken by Lady Evelyn Cameron and reproduced courtesy of the Montana Historical Society. Photos on pages 2 and 4 were taken by Eileen Gallagher.

## credits

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# Women and Media

by Sally Mauk

With a title like "Women and Media", I feel a bit like Virginia Woolf when she was asked to address the topic "Women and Fiction": was that to mean women who write fiction? or women characters in fiction? ; or the fiction written about women? i.e. there are several approaches to such a broad title. This brief article then, is doomed to attempt to cover too much; but perhaps a hint of all the title implies, will be impetus for further inquiry elsewhere, by the reader.

As for women in the media: we are still a minority. A brief survey of the directory of the Montana Broadcasters' Association (published June 1981) shows approximately 257 of all radio/television personnel in this state are women. Many of those 25% are office managers and administrative assistants, and many are news/music/and production directors: Of 13 television stations, only one has a woman as president or general manager of 67 radio stations, 3 have women as general managers. As in other traditional male occupations, the women in the electronic media are still making inroads, though not at a managerial level. I don't have the figures nationally, but I assume they are similar.

Has this increased presence made a difference? I would argue it has, particularly at those stations where women are "on the air" as reporters or broadcasters, and are given responsibility for the form and content of what a station pro-

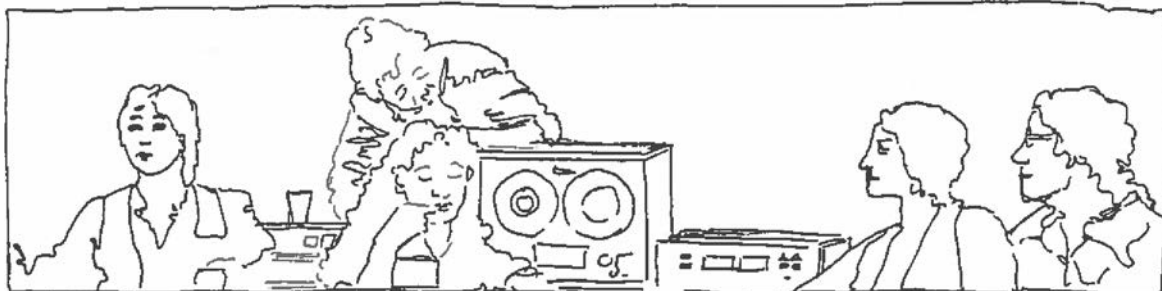
duces. That "difference" ranges from the simple "role model" effect of presenting women as competent relayers of either music or information; to the more direct difference of presenting either music or information in a consciously non-sexist way. There is also the less easily assessed difference of the effect the presence and participation of a woman has on her (male) co-workers, and what they produce. And again, that effect can range from the simple one of men realizing they are not the only sex of the species capable of doing what they do, to the best effect of actually changing what they do, like not playing blatantly misogynist music, or presenting a news report of specific interest to women, etc.

As for the media's treatment of women: there is still an abysmally long way to go. The historic precedence of sexism, and the continued dominance of men in the field, all work against the media portraying women accurately, and/or giving so-called "women's issues" the coverage they both warrant and deserve. Sex is still believed to sell better than truth, and women continue to be offensively stereotyped and insulted or (ignored.) There are notable efforts to change this especially in non-commercial broadcasting, but in general, the electronic

media is staunchly sexist in all its aspects: programming/style/format.

There are two factors which are working to change this: women in the field itself and women as media consumers. I firmly believe the woman as media consumer can have a profound effect, especially on a local and state level, and especially in a state the size of Montana. The TV and radio stations here have small staffs, small budgets, and the competition for a small audience demands they be responsive to that audience. While 50 letters to ABC protesting a vile show like "Three's Company" would probably have minimal effect, 50 letters to a local program offensive to women, would have a significant, change engendering effect. Much of what is consumed, is locally produced, be it music or news and public affairs, and content of that can be influenced by the local consumer.

The importance of active participation of women in the media they consume and the media they may produce is the importance of the media itself. The great debate of whether media is a creator or relayer of change, is not a debate with me. I believe it is both. And until and unless women actively participate in its creation, our ability to control our own change is severely limited. The New Right has not poured millions of dollars into television and radio broadcasting because they are enamored of the technology; with that media control, they believe they can change the des-



(continued from page 3)

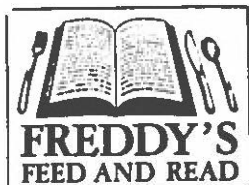
tiny of people's lives. And the measure of their success is tied directly to the measure of their control of media. (Such a handy example!)

Working as a news editor/broadcaster at a public radio station, I am both a creator and consumer of media. I have direct influence on what a local radio station produces (by choice of issue to report on or record to play); how it is produced (flamboyantly or subtly, tightly or loosely edited); and when. I know as a creator of media, I am constantly aware of the consumer I am trying to reach; I know the exhilaration when that consumer gives positive feedback, and the disappointment when the consumer doesn't like what I do. I also know the frustration when there is no feedback, and I imagine I am broadcasting to numbly-occupied space.

As a media consumer I know the joy of hearing/seeing a program or piece of music which gives me pleasure rather than insult, enlightenment rather than stupidity. And I know the anger when I see or hear distorted truth or blatant lies.

More than anything, in my dual role, I know the power media exerts on my life and others, and more than anything, I want that power shared by the many, not the few.

Sally Mauk is news editor at KUFM public radio.



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# Organizing Against the New Right

## by Judy Smith

Sometimes when I'm "writing my letter to my elected official" I get a futile feeling. So, one more letter supporting family planning or Title IX or the Women's Bureau, what does it matter?

But good news! There have been several victories recently and everyone's crediting them to grassroots letter campaigns. Planned Parenthood, the Women's Equity Action League (WEAL) and other groups organized major lobbying efforts to save federal funding for family planning and the Women's Equity Education Act from the New Right Legislators' efforts at block grant consolidation.

"Our most impressive victory, of course, was the renewal of Title X of the Public Health Service Act as a categorical program. This great victory was achieved only through the persistent efforts of everybody...the volunteers who organized letter-writing campaigns and lobbying visits...."

Faye Wattleton, President, National Planned Parenthood Federation

As a result of this effort, representatives in Washington received thousands of letters, telegrams, and postcards, more than 100,000 in all. Even the New Right Senators, Hatch, Denton, and Quayle had to respond to the outpouring of support for federally funded family planning programs.

During the recent Montana Special Legislative Session attempts were made to cut state money needed to match federal family planning funds. The Montana Pro-Choice Coalition and other groups and individuals alerted supporters and after some intense lobbying these efforts were blocked.

So organized resistance to New Right legislation and budget cutting does work-but it has to be a coordinated effort. We need networks in Montana that can produce hundreds of letters and phone calls on a wide range of women's issues. Remember, the New Right represents only a minority of people in this country-but it's a vocal minority. We have to be vocal too!

Write and call and get your friends to join you. If everyone who read the MWR recruited 3 people to write letters, we could produce over 4000 pieces of mail to our elected Montana officials. That's more than they now receive on any issue. And it could be fun: you could gather your letter writing group together-have a good discussion and eat treats while you write.

This winter and spring we'll need lots of letters as the New Right continues its attack on women's issues. Contact us here at the WRC or the Montana Pro-Choice Coalition at Box 902, Helena, Montana 59601 for information on upcoming legislation and letters that are needed. And let's discuss ways to develop networks throughout Montana that can respond on the full range of women's issues.

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2 POSTCARDS- "Montana" and "Women On  
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2 POSTERS- "Montana" (\$1.50) and  
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59801



## Women's History Week

The week of Mar. 8-12  
is Women's History Week, a  
national holiday honoring  
women who have made enduring  
contributions to the feminist  
cause.

The Women's Resource Center  
at the University of Montana  
has planned a week of activities  
which includes films, workshops  
and speakers in the University  
Center Mar. 8-12.

Appearing on the cover  
of this issue of the Montana  
Women's Resource are women's  
rights and suffrage leader,  
Elizabeth Cady Stanton,  
playwright Lorraine Hansberry,  
feminist and first woman to serve  
in the United States Congress,  
Jeannette Rankin, and organizer  
for farmworkers' rights, Dolores  
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Hours: Mon-Fri, 9-5:30; Sat, 10-2



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## BREAKFAST AT THE SHACK

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### Omelettes

Ham and Cheese—cheddar-jack-swiss

Sauteed Vegetables

Avocado and Tomato

Spanish—with ham, green pepper, tomato, jalapeno-ortega,  
and salsa with olives

Apple and cheddar with cinnamon

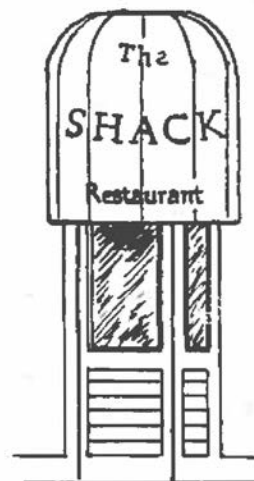
Sausage, swiss and fresh mushrooms

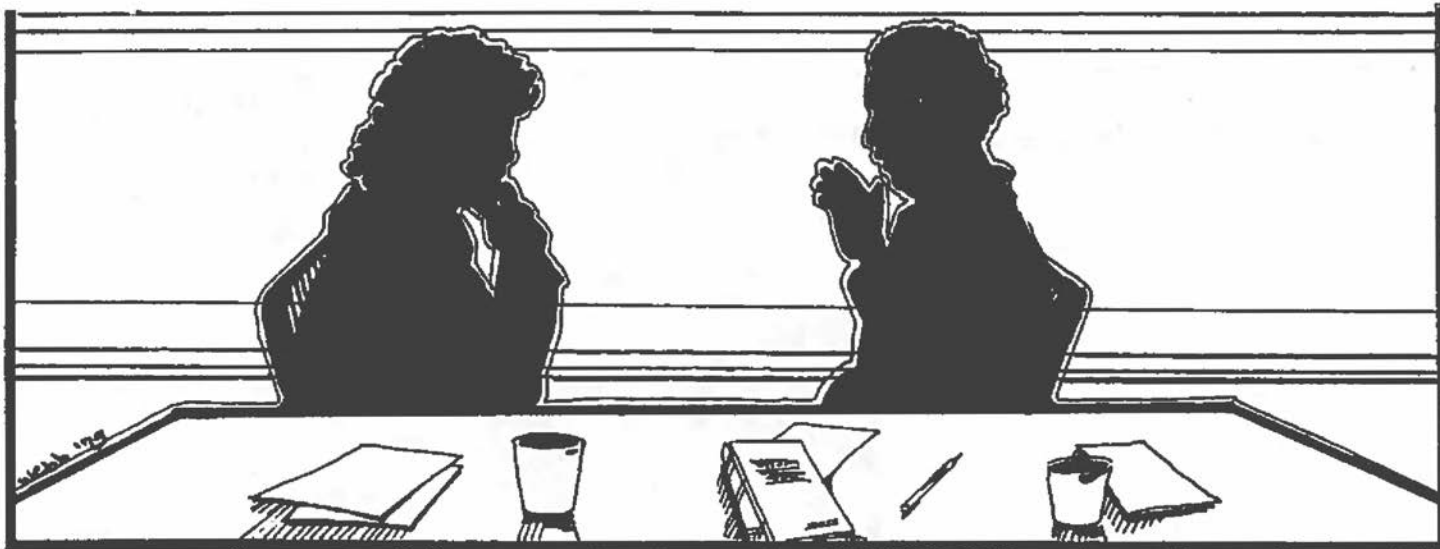
Oriental—shrimp, bamboo shoots, green onion and ginger

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## Can Men Be Feminists?

On November 11, the Women's Resource Center sponsored a Brown Bag lecture titled "Can Men Be Feminists?" Two opposing views were argued by Terri Harned, member of the Women's Resource Center, and Lucy Stevenson, member of the Montana Network for Nuclear Disarmament. Here are excerpts from the discussion.

### Terri Harned:

According to my definition of feminism, men can be supportive of the women's movement and they can be non-sexist but they can not be feminists. My definition of feminism is two-fold. First it is the intellectual and emotional understanding of what it is to be oppressed because of one's sex. Second, it is women working on issues that concern our lives toward the empowerment of all women. It is being "woman-identified".

As a woman I understand what it is to be limited because of my sex. I know what it is to be the victim to be passive, and to be devalued by the society.

My identity as a feminist comes from the work women have done throughout history and through my work with women today.

I do not believe that men want to receive their self-identity through the achievements of women, nor should they. The kind of oppression women face is not in the range of experiences of men. Men should relate to the women's movement not as feminists but as supporters.

For example, I can sympathize with blacks because, like women, they are oppressed by society. However, being white, I cannot relate to being devalued on the basis of my skin color. I could support the Black Power movement, but I would not call myself a member.

Also, it would be important for me, as a sup-

porter of blacks, to change my behavior and the behavior of other whites toward blacks, rather than telling them what changes they should make.

Similarly, men who wish to support feminism should work with other men on changing their behavior toward women.

The point to remember is one group can not give freedom to another. The oppressed group must liberate itself. Power must come from within.

Feminism is the most important word in my vocabulary; it shapes my entire world view. I enter every political movement as a woman committed to the empowerment of women. Some questions arise when I consider the possibility of men being feminists. Why do men want to be feminists, what does the word feminism mean to them?

Why is it important for (cont.)

For me, there is a danger in women wanting men to be feminists. The danger lies in the possibility that women will begin to look outside of themselves for strength, leadership and direction. Women must make their own changes and empower themselves.

There is always the chance that if a group is allowed to take control of its own destiny, it will change in ways that are unexpected and sometimes unwanted by the dominant culture. I believe liberation is worth its costs.

I look forward to the time when we can live together without racism or sexism, but that time has not arrived. For now, women need the feminist movement as their separate space.

## Lucy Stevenson:

Of primary importance in defining feminism is the realization that the oppression of women is needed by our present capitalistic economic system. Since women appear in every class, race, and religion, we represent a universal victim of capitalism.

Power, in a capitalist society, means the ability of one group to dictate over another. Choices about how we want our lives to take shape are influenced by economic and social concerns, and the desire of one group to control another manifests itself in one group removing the choices of another.

The hierarchical form of our government and business structure is reproduced in all aspects of society; among races, within families, and within communities. Because this structure is reproduced, on a smaller scale, within our daily lives, the hier-

archy begins to appear natural to us.

The most basic of these hierarchies occurs within the traditional family. Here is the place where a man is often allowed to reign supreme. He willingly trods to work every day in order to maintain the place where he is in control.

Because this role is threatened by women working, becoming educated and having more choices, the disintegration of the family is often attributed to the liberation of women.

Empowerment is a continuing process of developing one's own inner strengths and increasing control over one's life without needing a person underfoot in order to do so. It is power that has its beginnings and ends within the individual. We, as feminists, must embody new, non-hierarchical ways of interaction, or our words will be hollow and ineffective.

Also, feminists want a change of society rather than in society. Reforms will not alter this society's basic structure, which does not allow women the same rights as men.

The person who thinks we will simply evolve into a more just society cannot be a feminist. Many people work hard to maintain the status quo, and we must more than counter their efforts.

The above definition can fit either a man or a woman. Arguments based on biological distinction of the sexes are powerful tools used to maintain the status quo. If feminists use these same arguments, we do not make ourselves distinct from that which we are fighting.

The old adage about fighting fire with fire is one that I would like thrown out. When we argue whether "men can..."

we refer to them in terms of their gender and use it to classify them, just as we have been classified for centuries. Moreover, we are doing exactly what society dictates by distinguishing on the basis of sex. We are using the sexes as an insurmountable barrier supporting the factionalization of this society.

Equal rights can only exist in a society in which each individual is considered and there is no classification. To make classifications on the basis of sex is to ignore the individual.

I do not think we can create a new society from old standards. However, the changes will be gradual, and starting from within this old and tired framework is the only way that I know of to proceed.

One comment made at the talk was that men cannot understand what the women's movement is all about because they cannot feel what it is to be oppressed as a woman. However, I don't think feminists must necessarily be inspired by emotions. For me, feminism involves intellectual rather than emotional output.

Another person at the talk stressed the importance of more unity among women and said that men must take second place to that unity.

I certainly do not mean to downplay the importance of women's groups and activities. However, when looking for allies, feminists should not use gender as a criterion.



TO THE LIGHTHOUSE

for Virginia Woolf

Whenever I try to imagine her,  
That great gawky bird settling and then rising  
Nervously, with all that elegance

It is much too painful, I turn my head away.

Goat. And the odor of goat. Chalk  
Powders the children's faces.

Out of that nursery the fine hands  
Crusted with rings, the fingers  
Sorrowful as bone...

Reading the biography I found her footprints  
And followed them until they were bombed out,  
Swallowed up by memoirs, filled with water...

It was not she but I  
Who turned my head away.

I could not bear it:  
Out of the emptiness of the ocean

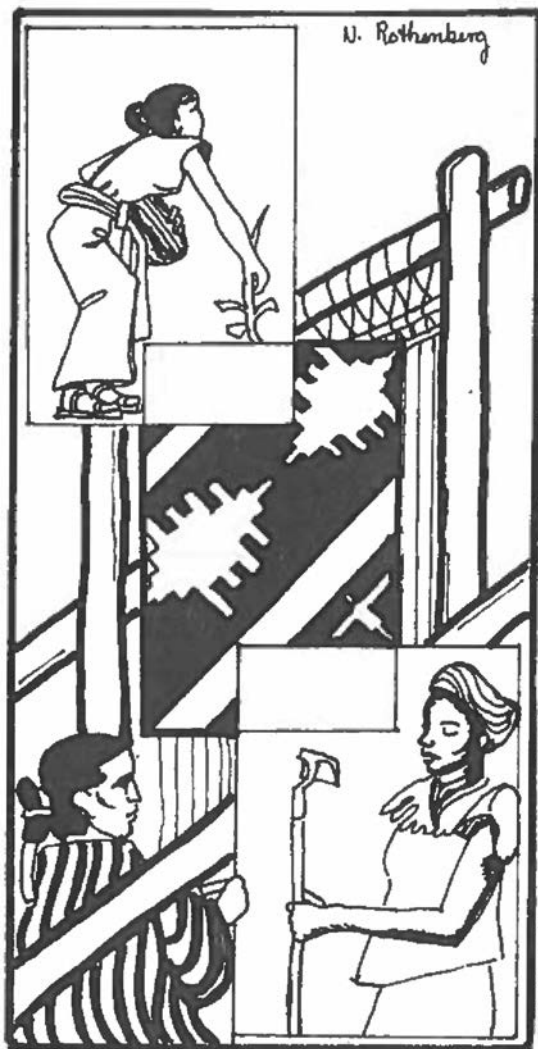
Over and over the huge Fin  
That kept rising, the sleek razor's edge  
Slicing across the horizon...

But she contained it all:  
Obscene familiar,  
Dread intimate of the mind,

With scared, luminous eyes  
She stared hard at it

And then built her books against it,  
Those perilously leaning towers,

Dense slabs of light moving  
Moth-like, over the waves of time.



Off Our Backs, Dec. 1981

from The Dog That Was Barking Yesterday

Patricia Goedicke is visiting poet at the University of Montana for winter quarter, 1981-82. She is the author of five books, the most recent of which is Crossing the Same River, (University of Massachusetts Press, 1980). She will return to her teaching position at San Miguel de Allende, Mexico, where she and her husband reside, in the spring.

## IN THE OCEAN

At first my mother would be shy  
Leaving my lame father behind

But then she would tuck up her bathing cap  
And fly into the water like a dolphin,

Slippery as bamboo she would bend  
Everywhere, everywhere I remember

For though he would often be criticizing her,  
Blaming her, finding fault

Behind her back he would talk about her  
All through our childhood, to me and my sister

She rarely spoke against him

Except to take us by the hand  
In the ocean we would laugh together

As we never did on dry land

Because he was an invalid  
Usually she was silent

But this once, on her deathbed

Hearing me tell it she remembered  
Almost before I did, and she smiled

One more time to think of it,  
How, with the waves crashing at our feet

Slithering all over her wet skin

We would rub against her like minnows  
We would flow between her legs, in the surf

Smooth as spaghetti she would hold us  
Close against her like small polliwogs climb

All over her as if she were a hill,  
A hill that moved, our element

But hers also, safe  
In the oval of each other's arms

This once she would be weightless  
As guiltless, utterly free

Of all but what she loved  
Smoothly, with no hard edges,

My long beautiful mother  
In her white bathing cap, crowned

Like an enormous lily

Over the brown arrow of her body,  
The limber poles of her legs,

The strong cheekbones, and the shadows  
Like fluid lavender, everywhere

In a rainbow of breaking foam

Looping and sliding through the waves  
We would swim together as one

Mother and sea calves gliding,  
Floating as if all three of us were flying.

from Crossing the Same River



# Single Parenting

by Diane Hadden



Photo by Helen Koba, Community Jobs, March 1981

The number of one-parent families has radically increased in the last decade, due to rising divorce rates and the fact that more single mothers are opting to raise their children alone. One-parent families have been regarded by some as deficient or handicapped, however, as a family therapist, I have observed that the quality of parenting depends more on the level of parental interest, energy and skill than on the presence of two parents.

One person may have difficulty doing all the daily activities that are shared in a two-parent family, and the single parent does face certain problems. However, the one-parent family can provide for its own needs.

While one and two-parent families have many similar strengths and weaknesses, being a single parent means taking most of the responsibility for decisions about the children, which makes it difficult to provide both limits and loving.

Since it is sometimes difficult to say, "No," to a child, the single parent may feel as if he or she is always the bad guy. A single parent may fear that setting rules will interfere with his or her closeness to the children.

The parent may allow the child extra freedoms in order to avoid conflict, but when the child starts to expect too much, the parent must crack down. A cycle can develop of rules being bent at some times and strictly enforced at others, depending on how the parent is feeling.

Single parents often have the advantage of closer, one-to-one relationships with their children. Single parents also tend to work together with their children at solving family problems, and as a result the children are more mature and self-sufficient.

As a family therapist, I recommend that parents develop clear, consistent rules that fit his or her standards as to how children should behave. The parent should then develop a suitable punishment for each rule infraction. Punishment should depend on the frequency and severity of the offense, and on the age of the child. Of course, a parent cannot predict and plan for all misbehavior. However, by planning rules and discipline ahead of time, the parent can respond consistently to the child rather than feeling unprepared when a problem arises.

One of the double-edged swords of one-parent families is that children have added responsibilities, which causes them to develop maturity and dependability but may backfire if they take more of a burden than is necessary.

A child who assumes more adult responsibilities than children his or her age normally do is often referred to as a "parental child." Children who can't handle responsibilities are prone to extreme swings in dependability and excessive worry, and may criticize how well the parent functions.

Sometimes, sibling rivalry develops because the eldest child, who is often left in charge of younger children, may try to control them all the time. As they mature, younger children can become rebellious toward the parental child, as if that child were an actual parent. Regardless of how mature the parental child is, he or she is ill-prepared to handle this.

Teenagers in a one-parent family also tend to act older than they are, and may empathize and become confidantes with the parent, which can strengthen the parent-child relationship. However, if the parent expects the child to be adult-like all of the time, the child may miss out on the pleasures of being a teenager.

When dealing with a parental child, the parent needs to evaluate whether there are too many pressures on the child to be adult-like. Care should be taken not to give the eldest child too many responsibilities, especially if other children are mature enough to share the load.

From my own observations and from research, (Surviving the Breakup, Wallerstein & Kelly), the responses of children to divorce are often related to their ages.

For example, children three to five years old may not understand what divorce means. They may develop fears of other kinds of losses, such as abandonment. Children this age frequently regress in language, toilet training and independence in the event of a divorce. They may have trouble making sense of what is happening between the parents and, as a result, may repeat questions or develop illogical perceptions.

Children nine through twelve years old are better able to handle and disguise their feelings in order to avoid pain. They are more aware of family problems than are younger children, yet, they may act unconcerned or brave and often use high levels of activity and anger to let off anxieties. Since older children are more aware of the difference between right and wrong, they may try to decide which parent is at fault, sometimes siding with one parent against the other. Children may be angry at the custodial parent in proportion with their longing for the absent parent.

For adolescents, a divorce often interrupts their process of moving away from the family. Following a divorce, adolescents are often given more chores and may feel more responsible for the family. Their time between childhood and adulthood may be shortened, and dramatic behavior or emotional withdrawal are indications of fear and depression.

Adolescents may be shocked by changes in their parents' lifestyles and may respond to their parents' new sexual relationships by jumping into premature sexual relationships.

Often, adolescents in one-parent families resent having the normal limitations for children their age, because they are performing adult duties. The parent should make generational boundaries clear and be sure that expectations of the child are consistent with his or her age.

Considering the complexity of human behavior and emotions, it is not surprising that parents, whether single or married, sometimes have problems with their children. When problems arise that the parent cannot resolve, I strongly recommend that they seek more information through books, friends, family and professionals.

Diane Hadden is a family therapist at the Missoula Mental Health Center. She recently spoke at a WRC Brown Bag on the subject of single parenting.



Photo by Vera Aronson, Community Jobs, June 1981

### Single Parent Workshops

In November and December, the WRC sponsored a series of three workshops concerning single-parenting. Participants shared mutual concerns and possible solutions to problems they held in common.

Special topic areas were discussed in three sessions. In the first, Sharon Brogan, MSW, Western Montana Mental Health Center, led a problem-solving workshop dealing with public assistance agencies, work, school, and the public and personal expectations of family life. In the next session, Janet Allison, Ph.D., Clinical Psychologist, talked about stress and proposed ways that single parents can cope with it. The final session focused on the children of single parents. Diane Haddon, MSW, Western Montana Mental Health Center, worked with parents to help them understand typical reactions of children to the breaking up of families, sibling rivalry, and problems with ex-spouses.

The workshops were attended by approximately 90 single parents in the Missoula area, and interest was expressed in continuing programs which deal with the special problems of single parents.

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That Tillie Olsen was a creative woman swallowed up in the exigencies of motherhood was not unique, but her rare talent made her plight more poignant.

Tillie Olsen wrote Yonnodio: From the 30's when she was 19 years old, and it wasn't published until she was 60 years old. It was found in an attic, discarded as many of her other short novels of youth had been.

After her book, Tell Me A Riddle, a collection of short stories, won the O'Henry Fiction award in 1961, critics realized that one of the most innovative American authors had been overlooked for nearly 40 years. What had happened?

Tillie Olsen tells her personal story, and that of many other forgotten women authors, in her book, Silences. Olsen's family discovered that she had talent when, as a teenager growing up in Minnesota in the 1920's, she began to write. An uncle discouraged her from writing, saying that "such young talent in a young girl will only bring trouble." Her father also tried to squelch her ambition by destroying many of her manuscripts, and judging from the fragment left of her early effort, Yonnodio, a great literary treasure was lost due to cultural biases against creative women. Olsen points out in the book that the battle for recognition of creative women has just begun.

In Silences, Olsen goes on to reveal the second stifling condition that thwarted her writing in later years: motherhood. She bore four children and always had to work full time at menial jobs to make ends meet. She struggled to find time for herself, but the effort became too overwhelming, and after years of borrowing time here and there from her chores to write, she lost her ability to write cohesive thoughts. She had lost what she refers to in the book as "the craziness of endurance" needed to pursue her triple role as mother, breadwinner and writer.

Silences also contains a quote from Dorothy Fisher's Fables for Parents: "...More than any other human relationship, overwhelmingly more, motherhood means being instantly interruptable, responsive, responsible..."

Olsen goes on to say that "almost no mothers- as almost no part-time, part-self persons- have created enduring literature."

In Silences, Olsen uses her own experiences as a writer to exemplify how women authors suffer "inequities, restrictions, penalties, denials, leechings and damaging differences in circumstances" because of men. She devotes 10 pages of the book to listing the discrepancies in recognition accorded writers of the two sexes, and writes that on college campuses, in anthologies and in the awarding of honors such as the Pulitzer Prize, women aren't acknowledged for their literary achievements.

Olsen stresses that the reason for this lack of recognition is lack of exposure due to the fact that most literary critics are male and don't appreciate women authors. She pursues this point in Silences by examining the book, Life in the Iron Mills, by Rebecca Harding Davis, which first appeared as a series of articles in Atlantic Monthly Magazine in 1861. Davis' book was the very first work of fiction that dealt with industrialization and the horrible conditions in mines and factories. Her account shocked the American reading public, and Olsen uses extensive excerpts from the book.

Life in the Iron Mills is excellent fiction, yet, it was barely acknowledged as a literary work until Olsen helped to get it republished in 1972.

Davis ceased writing shortly after Life in the Iron Mills was published, when her publishers asked her to be "less depressing" in her writing. One major point

Olsen makes in Silences is that women are much more apt to write about the injustices of society and seem to have more "conscience" than do men.

Olsen's book, Yonnodio is a heartbreaker. Set in the early 1920's in a Wyoming mining town, the book is the story of the Holbrook family, who leave mining in search of a better existence.

In 32 of the most succinct, poetic pages ever published, the reader gets the full scope of the hopelessness of their dangerous, hungry existence as chapter three finds the Holbrooks travelling to South Dakota. Olsen details the uselessness of tenant farming. No one can make a go of it on another man's land. The last four chapters take the reader to the big city with the Holbrook family

where they experience life in the tenements, sewage work and the slaughterhouse business. From the mines to the tenant farm, to the city, the Holbrooks try to put in an honest living, struggling to feed themselves. What makes Yonnodio such a chilling account is that it is told both in the voices of tired, disgruntled adults and those of naive children.

One of the central characters in Yonnodio is Mazie, a 6-year-old girl taking care of her three little brothers and diapering the new baby in flour sacks as he lies in a packing crate. Mazie's father drinks and "takes it out on the kids," while her mother tries to pacify him. The reader gets the full spectrum of the homelife of the poor. Mazie talks to herself out on the garbage heaps that are her backyard, telling her brothers, "I am aknowen things. I can diaper a baby. I can tell ghost stories. I know words and words. Ejication. Bug dust. 'Bowels of the earth.' It means the mine. Earth is a stummy and mebbe she ets the men that come down. And a lamp like poppa's comes out, but in the sky."

Mazie keeps her sense of wonder throughout the story, and one hopes she will escape the poor woman's fate of endless drudgery and childbearing that finally render her mother nearly comatose. But there are few options for the young, uneducated and poor.

The title story from Olsen's book, Tell Me A Riddle, has been made into an upcoming motion picture directed by Lee Grant.

The story, written in Russian-Jewish immigrant dialect, creates a new stylistic genre in travelling miles via a few words. The story centers on yet another aspect of motherhood, the empty-nest syndrome, as a woman in the last days of her life recounts what all her years of mothering amount to after her children are grown.

The woman, who is terminally ill, has one final wish; to be alone and at home, "to live within, and not move to the rhythms of others." She longs for her own

home now that it is no longer her enemy..."the people in it making her its slave...the constant battle to keep it clean with their tracking, smudging, littering, dirtying, endless defeat."

Instead, her husband takes her on a final trek to say goodbye to all eight of her children.

In her final days, the old woman in Tell Me A Riddle can no longer stand to touch a child. She feels as if children have wasted her life with their needs, and a constant round of grandchildren are shoved into her wasting arms. Bereft of strength and under the influence of heavy painkillers, she begins to rattle off a monologue dredged up by the sight of the babies, as if every conversation she'd had in her life had been recorded and was now being played back. She begins to talk to herself night and day, recounting the years. As her husband and children listen, they hear the sum total of her remembered days

of mundane house talk and endless fights with bill collectors wanting more than she has to give. Aghast, the husband wonders aloud, "Where was all the joy? Was this all?"

If ever there was a good time to read Olsen's books, the time is now. With the Reagan administration's planned cuts in aid for the poor and underprivileged, now is the time to get informed, angry and vocal. Olsen suffered because she was poor, a woman and a mother.

Olsen spent many years doubting her abilities as a writer, as many other women writers have doubted themselves. Unless the women of today expose themselves to the literary achievements of women, many more fine writers may be lost.

Silences, Dell, N.Y., 1965

Tell Me A Riddle, Dell, N.Y., 1960

Yonnodio: From the 30's, Delacorte Press, 1974



Family of Woman, 1979.

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## —upcoming events—

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### Missoula

- February 16 Susan B. Anthony Birthday Luncheon, the Lily, noon, RSVP to WRC
- February 25 Women's Himalayan Expedition Slide show with team member Shari Kearney, 8 p.m., Psychology Underground Lecture Hall, U.M.
- February 27 To Have or Not Have Children, one day workshop on making the decision, City County Library, 10 - 4, call WRC for more information
- March 7-13 Women's History Week-programs on KUVM; International Women's Potluck, March 8; ERA day; women and the arts; for more information, contact WRC
- March 12 Holly Near Concert, 8 p.m., University Theater, tickets \$6 and \$7 at the door
- April 23 Coffee House with Judy Fjell, feminist musician and composer, 8 p.m., U.C., U.M.
- May 14 & 15 Statewide Conference: What We Can Do About the New Right; speakers include Charlotte Bunch, Gloria Steinem (tentative), Pat Harper, Pat Regan, Judy Smith; roundtables; workshops; a chance for feminists around the state to exchange information and strategies and develop plans of action; see flier.
- June 4-6 Statewide Conference: Incest, No Longer A Secret...But A Community Problem; national and state speakers, information and resource exchange, skill training workshops; open to all interested; U.M.; contact Pam Roberts for more information, 728-3041.
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Winter Quarter Brown Bags-The Business of Women  
Wednesdays, noon, in the Montana Rooms, U.M. Campus

- Feb. 10 Women Owned and Operated Businesses  
Feb. 17 Balancing Careers and Relationships  
Feb. 24 Interviewing For A Job  
Mar. 3 Surviving As A Feminist in the Business World
- 

### Butte

- March 9 Speaker: Betty Williams, Irish Peace Movement, Nobel Peace Prize Recipient, St. Ann's Church, evening.
- March 13-April 30 Art Show: "Women by Women", sponsored by the Women's Network; at Black Orchid Gallery

### Bozeman

- March 14 Holly Near Concert, 7 p.m., Willson Auditorium, tickets \$7 and \$8 at the door; fundraiser for Alliance for a Nuclear Free Future

also in March, Statewide Conference on Men Who Batter, contact Jan Strout in Bozeman for more information.

Please send us information about events you would like included in the calender; we would like to list events in all areas of Montana and by different women's organizations.

## RESPONSE TO THE MWR QUESTIONNAIRE

We always thought lots of different people read the MWR and the questionnaire responses proved us right. Over 35 people returned the questionnaire and over 60 new subscriptions came in.

While many respondents checked all the possible topics and format ideas, there were several favorites: Montana newsbriefs, interviews with Montana feminists, descriptions of Montana feminist projects and an events calendar. Most people want to read about a wide range of women's issues and experience; some emphasized specific interests such as non-sexist education, health and political theory. Minority women's issues and lesbian feminism were suggested as important topics to include.

Our respondents ranged in age from 26 to 89, the majority are in their 30's; they live in towns with 89 to 75,000 residents; most are employed out of the home but a number listed homemaker as their occupation; the majority list Ms Magazine as the only other feminist publication they read.

From your response we've decided the MWR will continue to look for articles on a wide diversity of women's issues, emphasizing a Montana focus; attempt to include more newsbriefs and reviews; begin soliciting interviews with Montana feminists and feminist projects; and produce an upcoming events calendar. We will also include analysis on a state and national level of the New Right's efforts to legislate women back to second class citizenship.

\_\_\_\_ Yes, I want to subscribe to the Montana Women's Resource. Here's my \$2.

Here is a donation of \$ \_\_\_\_ to help with extra expenses.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Address: \_\_\_\_\_

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*coming to Missoula*

*Holly Near*

Holly Near has been called an entertainer with a social conscience. Her songs tell of her attitudes; they are songs against war, against nuclear power: "You can move to California or you can move to Spain, but there ain't nowhere you can run from the nuclear rain," about the need for workers to organize, and are filled with awareness of women's issues. She doesn't confine her songwriting talents to the political arena, and writes what she calls "responsible love songs." Because of the often poignant lyrics and the emotion packed into them, nearly everyone is moved by her music.

Near has recorded five albums, the most recent "Fire in the Rain," all on Redwood Records label. Sales of her albums have reached almost 250,000, and her latest sold 30,000 copies within the first month of its release. These sales were promoted almost entirely by word-of-mouth.

Holly Near will be performing in Missoula at the University Theatre on the U of M campus on Friday March 12 at 8:00p.m. Tickets are \$6 in advance and \$7 the day of show. They are available at the Women's Resource Center, Music Magic, Freddy's Feed and Read and Budget Tapes and Records in Missoula. Tickets will be available in outlying communities as well.



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# WHAT WE CAN DO ABOUT THE NEW RIGHT

*a two-day conference for feminists around the state  
to exchange information and strategies and develop plans of action*

*TOPICS will include  
family, reproductive freedom, equal employment opportunity, education, sexual preference*

## *SPEAKERS*

National, state, and local speakers:  
Gloria Steinam, Ms magazine (tentative),  
Charlotte Bunch, National Gay Task Force,  
Pat Harper, National Church Panel; Pat  
Regan, state legislator; Judy Smith,  
Women's Resource Center and Mt Teen  
Pregnancy Project; & others will provide  
information and an analysis of the New  
Right - who they are and what issues  
they are attacking AND how feminists are  
taking action

## *ROUNDTABLES*

Discussion groups to identify action  
being taken by feminists, plan  
further strategies of response, and  
formulate resolutions

## *SKILL SHARING*

Workshops on using computers,  
effective media outreach, forming  
Political Action Committees, and  
canvassing

## *PLENARY SESSION*

Adopt resolutions of action

*MAY 14 and 15, 1982*

*Univ. of Montana, Missoula*

*An information packet on the New Right in Montana available to preregistrants*

*SEND US YOUR IDEAS*

*SAVE THESE DATES*

*Conference Committee, Women's Resource Center, Univ. of Mt., Missoula, Mt. 59812*